

WORKSHEET

Documentation of Land Use Plan Conformance and NEPA Adequacy (DNA)



Bureau of Land Management
Safford Field Office
Safford, AZ

A. Identifying Information

NEPA No.: DOI-BLM-AZ-G010-2016-0009-DNA

Lease/Serial/Case File No.: AZA-036883

Project Title/Type: Northern Arizona University (NAU) Special Recreation Permit (SRP)

Location of Proposed Action:

Aravaipa Canyon, T 6 S, R 18 E, S 15., and UTM 12S 548023 3641835. See figure 1 (Attached).

Description of the Proposed Action and Any Applicable Mitigation Measures:

NAU proposes to provide hiking and backpacking tours within the Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness. Trip length would be from one to three days per Aravaipa Canyon permit regulations. Maximum group size would be 10 people including guides. All solid human waste and liquids will be disposed of according to Leave No Trace principles. All other trash will be packed out. All cooking will take place with stove only. Applicant will provide breakfast, lunch and dinner on all trips. The applicant has held permits with the BLM and Forest Service in the past. Commercial SRP Stipulations for the Safford Field Office will apply. This would be a five year permit.

Applicant: Northern Arizona University (NAU)

B. Conformance with the Land Use Plan (LUP) and Consistency with Related Subordinate Implementation Plans

LUP Name* Safford District Resource Management Plan (RMP) Date Approved ROD part I: Sept, 1992. ROD part II: July 1994

LUP Name* Aravaipa Ecosystem Management Plan EA (AEMP) Date Approved September, 2015

Other document** _____ Date Approved _____

*List applicable LUPs (e.g., Resource Management Plans or applicable amendments).

**List applicable activity, project, management, water quality restoration, or program plans.

☐ The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUP(s) because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decisions:

☒ The proposed action is in conformance with the LUP(s), even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following LUP decisions (objectives, terms, and conditions):

Safford District RMP

RR07 The Safford District will endeavor to provide a variety of recreational opportunities that meets public demand and are compatible with the Bureau's stewardship responsibilities. Partial ROD I page 7.

AEMP EA DOI-BLM-AZ-G010-2006-0001

Objective H.2: Manage visitor use in Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness (ACW) to preserve the wilderness characteristics of the canyon, minimize impacts on resources, maintain an environment with few traces of human presence, and preserve a unique place for solitude and appreciation of nature.

C. Identify applicable National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents and other related documents that cover the proposed action.

List by name and date all applicable NEPA documents that cover the proposed action.

- AEMP EA, September, 2015. DOI-BLM-AZ-G010-2006-0001.
- Special Recreation Permits for Commercial Recreation Activities on Public Lands in Arizona EA. AZ-931-93-001

List by name and date other documentation relevant to the proposed action (*e.g.*, biological assessment, biological opinion, watershed assessment, allotment evaluation, and monitoring report).

- Biological Opinion on the Aravaipa Ecosystem Management Plan (AESO/SE 02EAAZ00-2012-F-0282).

D. NEPA Adequacy Criteria

1. Is the proposed action substantially the same action (or is a part of that action) as previously analyzed?

☒ Yes ☐ No

Documentation of answer and explanation:

The proposed action is in conformance the Safford District RMP and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) ROD. Additionally, the existing AEMP EA (DOI-BLM-AZ-G010-2006-0001) analyzed day use and multi-day commercial trips inside Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness. NAU proposes to lead guided hiking and backpacking tours in the Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness.

Special Recreation Permits EA AZ-931-93-001 also analyzed the same activities (hiking, backpacking) that the NAU is proposing.

2. Is the range of alternatives analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s) appropriate with respect to the current proposed action, given current environmental concerns, interests, resource values, and circumstances?

☒ Yes ☐ No

Documentation of answer and explanation:

- The Special Recreation Permits EA (AZ-931-93-001) analyzed the impacts of a "variety of outdoor recreation opportunities. Hunting, fishing, backpacking, trail riding and birdwatching." From the analysis, the EA developed Arizona BLM Stipulations for Commercial Special Recreation Permits to help "protect the lands or resources involved, reduce user conflicts, or minimize health and safety hazards." Resources

that were analyzed were: Cultural Resources, Wildlife, Threatened or Endangered Species, Wild Horses and Burros, Wilderness, Recreation, Soils, Water and Riparian Areas and vegetation. The proposed activities and impacts from NAU are the same that were addressed in the Special Recreation Permits EA (AZ-931-93-001).

The AEMP EA (DOI-BLM-AZ-G010-2006-0001) specifically addressed activities and impacts associated with commercial SRP use within the Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness. The following resources were analyzed in the AEMP EA: Water and Riparian, Upland, Wildlife, Cultural, Environmental Justice and Socioeconomics, Recreation, Travel Management and Special Area Designations. The proposed activities from NAU are the same as the activities analyzed in the AEMP EA (DOI-BLM-AZ-G010-2006-0001) and would not create any new resource issues or concerns that were not analyzed previously.

3. Is the existing analysis adequate and are the conclusions adequate in light of any new information or circumstances (including, for example, riparian proper functioning condition [PFC] reports; rangeland health assessments; Unified Watershed Assessment categorizations; inventory and monitoring data; most recent Fish and Wildlife Service lists of threatened, endangered, proposed, and candidate species; most recent BLM lists of sensitive species)? Can you reasonably conclude that all new information and all new circumstances are insignificant with regard to analysis of the proposed action?

☒ Yes ☐ No

Documentation of answer and explanation:

There has been no significant change in the circumstances or significant new information germane to the Proposed Action. The Bureau of Land Management, Safford Field Office, consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on the Aravaipa Ecosystem Management Plan (AESO/SE 02EAAZ00-2012-F-0282) and the proposed actions of hiking and backpacking on federally endangered loach minnow (*Tiaroga cobitis*) and its critical habitat, federally endangered spikedace (*Meda fulgida*) and its critical habitat, Gila topminnow (*Poeciliopsis occidentalis occidentalis*), and desert pupfish (*Cyprinodon macularius*), within Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness. The USFWS determined that the actions of recreational use may affect listed fish species and their habitat. However, the USFWS expects effects to individuals to be small, infrequent, and not be sufficient to affect the presence of the species or their populations as most adults will likely avoid the disturbances from hiking/backpacking. Some eggs and larvae may also be affected, but effects are anticipated to be small, infrequent, and not measurable for reproduction. Effects to habitat will either be temporary or limited to specific areas. The vast majority of the creek where the fish could occur will continue to provide the necessary characteristics to maintain the populations. In addition to federally listed fish species, Aravaipa Creek also supports five BLM Special Status Species, including Roundtail chub (*Gila robusta*), federally proposed as threatened, and four BLM Sensitive fish species, Longfin dace (*Agosia chrysogaster*), Speckled dace (*Rhinichthys osculus*), Sonora sucker (*Catostomus insignis*), and Desert sucker (*Pantosteus clarkii*). The above-mentioned impacts to listed fish species and their habitat from the proposed actions would be the same for the five BLM Special Status Species and their habitats.

Hiking and backpacking in Aravaipa Canyon have been determined by the USFWS to "may adversely affect" Mexican spotted owl. In the Biological Opinion on the Aravaipa Ecosystem Management Plan, EA #AZ-0410-2006-040, the service states, "Due to the relatively narrow canyon of Aravaipa and Turkey creeks and the inability to predict where an owl may be roosting, road activities and recreation have the potential to cause flushing or an alteration in roosting owl behavior during the breeding season. Visual and noise disturbances may adversely affect the behavior of Mexican spotted owls during breeding, nesting, or foraging activities. Most of these actions will

occur during the day when owls are roosting or nesting in the side canyons, and, generally, any nest or roost location is isolated sufficiently from roads and recreational use such that these actions are unlikely to result in disturbance." Similar conditions will exist for the Yellow-billed cuckoo and southwest willow flycatcher. Due to the presence of these species, it has been determined that there may be an effect from the proposed activities, however the effects will be minimal and most likely will be insignificant.

4. Are the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that would result from implementation of the new proposed action similar (both quantitatively and qualitatively) to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document?

☒ Yes ☐ No

Documentation of answer and explanation:

The direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of the proposed activities (hiking and backpacking) are the same as those impacts already identified in both the AEMP EA (DOI-BLM-AZ-G010-2006-0001) and the SRP EA (AZ-931-93-001). The impacts of these proposed activities (hiking and backpacking) would be mitigated by the Commercial SRP Stipulations for Safford Field Office. The resulting impacts will be less than significant as determined in the EAs and their associated with the Findings Of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

5. Are the public involvement and interagency review associated with existing NEPA document(s) adequate for the current proposed action?

☒ Yes ☐ No

Documentation of answer and explanation:

The AEMP EA (DOI-BLM-AZ-G010-2006-0001) and the SRP EA (AZ-931-93-001) included substantial public/interagency comment and review. The EAs addressed public comments/issues. Public comments/responses are documented in both EAs.

E. Persons/Agencies/BLM Staff Consulted

Name	Title	Resource/Agency Represented
Todd Murdock	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation, Wilderness/BLM
Amelia Underwood	Assistant Field Manager (renewables)	Air Quality, Climate Change, Flood Plains, Water Quality, Water Rights, Wetland Riparian/BLM
Dan McGrew	Archeologist	Cultural Resources, Native American Relations/BLM
Jason Martin	Range Management Specialist	Environmental Justice and Socioeconomics, Nonnative/invasive Plants, Prime/Unique Farmlands, Range, Soils/BLM
RJ Estes	Range Management Specialist	Hazardous Materials, Solid Waste/BLM
Roberta Lopez	Reality Specialist	Lands/Realty/BLM
Sharisse Fisher	GIS Specialist	NEPA Maps
Mark McCabe	Wildlife Biologist	Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species (TES), Animal Species,
		Wildlife
Jeff Conn	Natural Resource Specialist	TES Animal Species, TES Plant Species, Wildlife/BLM
Heidi Blasius	Fisheries Biologist	TES Fish/Fisheries/BLM

Note: Refer to the DOI-BLM-AZ-G010-2006-0001-EA and AZ-931-31-001 for a complete list of the team members participating in the preparation of the original environmental analysis or planning documents.

CONCLUSION

Based on the review documented above, I conclude that this proposal conforms to the applicable land use plan and that the existing NEPA documentation fully covers the proposed action and constitute BLM's compliance with the requirements of NEPA.

Note: If one or more of the criteria in Section D above are not met, a conclusion of conformance and/or NEPA adequacy cannot be made and this box cannot be checked.



Project Lead

 2/26/16

NEPA Coordinator



Scott C. Cooke, Field Manager



Date

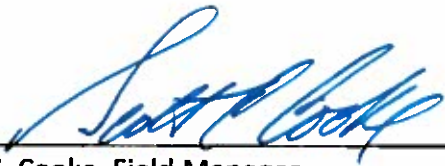
Note: The signed CONCLUSION on this Worksheet is part of an interim step in the BLM's internal decision process and does not constitute an appealable decision. However, the lease, permit, or other authorization based on this DNA is subject to protest or appeal pursuant to 43 CFR Part 4 and the program-specific regulations.

DECISION

I have reviewed this plan conformance and NEPA compliance record and have determined that the proposed action is either (a) in conformance with or (b) clearly consistent with terms, conditions, and decisions of the approved land use plan(s) and that no further environmental analysis is required. It is my decision to implement the project, as described, with any mitigation measures identified below.

Mitigation measures or other remarks:

- 1) Safford BLM Commercial SRP stipulations (attached)
- 2) Stipulations from the 1993 SRP EA Attachment A-Arizona BLM Stipulations For Commercial Special Recreation Permits (attached) will be incorporated into the SRP stipulations.



Scott C. Cooke, Field Manager

2/26/16

Date

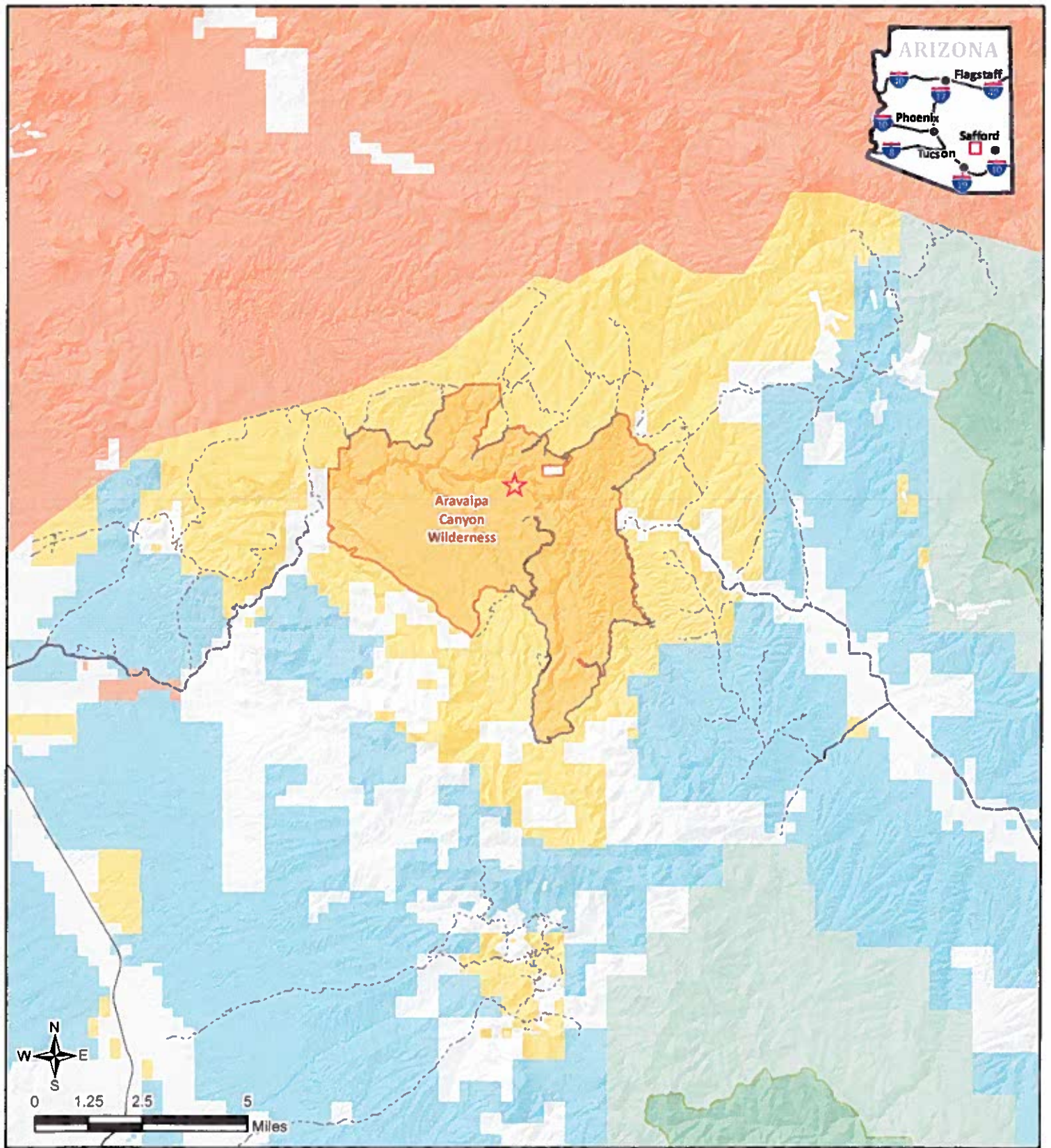


Figure 1. Project Location Map

**Northern Arizona University SRP
DOI-BLM-AZ-G010-2016-0009-DNA**

- BLM Wilderness Area
- BLM
- Indian Lands
- State
- Private
- USFS
- USFWS

— Primary Road Paved

★ Proposed use locations

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the BLM makes no warranty, expressed or implied, as to its accuracy and expressly disclaims liability for the accuracy thereof.

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Gila District Office
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